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How Useful the Bible's Power Is!

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. The word from God through which the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith in Jesus is 2 Timothy 3

But as for you, remain in what you have learned and been convinced of, since you know from whom you have learned it, namely, that from infancy you have known the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, for refuting, for correcting, and for training in righteousness, in order that the man of God may be capable, fully equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

This is the word of our Lord.

Dear friends in Christ, fellow saints washed clean in the blood of our risen Savior:

Do you believe that the Bible is the very word of our God? I know that you understand that to be the truth. In my opinion, that's one of the strengths of our church. We clearly confess that the Bible is God's verbally inspired word without error. Word for word, it's God's word. And you, dear members, are not afraid to say so, even in a world that wants to make it just another book. You know that the Bible is fully God's Word.

But that doesn't quite answer the question we started with. You know the Bible is God's word, but do you believe that as well? For you see, faith not only knows the truth; faith also acts with conviction based on the truth.

For example, let's say a farmer shows you his new 600 horse-power tractor that he spent over \$400,000 on. It's equipped with GPS auto-guidance, the most advanced hydraulics, and just about anything else you could want in a tractor. He tells you how important and necessary it is. But you only see it out of the shed for about an hour or so a week when he uses it to move the implements around in the yard. Would you begin to wonder how useful that tractor really was?

Like the farmer, that, dear friends, is the weakness in our faith as well. We know how powerful and important God's Word is. But how often do we actually use it in our daily lives. How often do we rely on its power? May the word of God before us today move our hearts as the Holy Spirit works within us so that our actions shout out: How useful the Bible's power is! Remember that theme. How useful the Bible's power is! It saves you through faith in Jesus, part one. And it fully equips you for every good work, part two. How useful the Bible's power is!

A. It save you through faith in Jesus

The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to Timothy. Timothy came from the city of Lystra in the central part of modern-day Turkey. When Paul visited that city on his Second Missionary Journey, he took young Timothy along for the rest of that mission trip

and the one that followed. After traveling with Paul for years, Timothy stayed at Ephesus to serve sort of as a head pastor in that growing center of Christianity. As Paul writes these words from a Roman dungeon, he knows that he will soon be put to death. He has been caught in the Emperor Nero's persecution against the Christians. 2 Timothy is the last of the Scriptures that come through the hand of the Apostle Paul. These are his parting words.

The Apostle wouldn't be here much longer. But Timothy had the Scriptures. That's all he needed. He had learned them from little on up, from his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois. He had them in writing, for that's what the Holy Scriptures are: God's written word. Only God can save, and so only his word can bring us that true wisdom that knows, trusts, and believes his saving plan. You, dear friends, have that plan in writing. You have the Bible, which is God's written word, the Scriptures. For the Scriptures are the words God himself had breathed into the writers as the Holy Spirit carried them along. Though Paul would soon be taken from this life, the Holy Scriptures stand forever. So he urges Timothy to continue in what he's learned from the Scriptures, to remain steadfast and constant in the faith that clings to God's written word.

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you have learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed ...” (2 Timothy 3:14-16 NIV84). How useful the Bible's power is! For it saves through faith in Jesus.

Whether as a little child or later in life, you, dear Christians, have learned the Scriptures and have been convinced of their truth, just as Timothy was. Although Jesus visibly ascended from this earth long ago, he has come to you through his written word, the Scriptures. Here, dear friends, in this book, here is the hidden wisdom -- not some arcane spell or technological breakthrough. Here's the true wisdom that fulfills our greatest desire and satisfies our deepest longing. Picture a little child lost. The darkness presses in. Strange noises echo all around. Night mists weave their icy touch. What does this lost child want? She wants to know the strong hand of her father rescuing her, bringing her safely home. She wants to know the soothing touch of her mother, drying her tears. She wants to know the warm safety of her own bed.

You, dear friend, you were lost in the darkness of unbelief, cut off from God by your sin, guilt echoing through your conscience, knowing that the icy grip of death would one day take you. But now the Holy Scripture have made you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Through the Scriptures you know Jesus Christ. You know him as your own dear Savior, your only Savior, who came to seek and to save what was lost, who came to find you. His nail-pierced hands have rescued you from the darkness. He's reconciled you to God, so that through faith you are God's dear child. His free promise of full forgiveness in his blood wipes away your tears of guilt. He's conquered death to bring you safely to your Father's house, your heavenly home. That's the hidden wisdom the Scriptures reveal. That's what makes you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

What power! But this is not just power for some day in the future. It's not just

useful for the day of our death. The wisdom of salvation changes the way we live each and every day. The way we cope and the choices we make are now in light of the glorious salvation that we have through faith in Jesus. For example, earlier in this chapter, Paul refers to the persecutions and sufferings he endured as he spread the Gospel. Why did Paul keep going? Why would Timothy persevere and endure? Because of the salvation they had in Jesus Christ.

So also you, dear Christian. What is the hardship, the tragedy, the struggle that wants to drain your hope and joy? Look at the salvation Jesus has won for you. Know the secret wisdom revealed by the Holy Scriptures: Christ crucified for you; Christ risen for your salvation. The Scriptures have made you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. That wisdom sees beyond your present suffering. It rejoices in the hope of salvation that you have in Christ Jesus. Nothing can rob you of this hope, for it is yours through faith alone. How useful the Bible's power is! It saves you through faith in Jesus.

B. It fully equips you for every good work

Now, dear friends, as we move to the second part, the Apostle lists several uses of God's word. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17 NIV84).

First of all, you can be sure that the Bible is useful because it comes from the mouth of God himself. It's God-breathed. He created and designed you. He knows what lies ahead of you. He knows your inner desires and your outer needs. Since he knows us so well, his wisdom has recorded what is truly useful for you and every Christian. And though we might not fully understand its use at times, God knows better than we do. Take him at his word.

Secondly, you can be sure of the Bible's power. Since the Bible is word of God, it carries his power. Something is useful only if it can accomplish its purpose. The Bible is powerful and effective. It does what God promises. Use it with the confidence that these are the words of the Almighty. How useful the Bible's power is!

Now the Apostle lists some specific uses. He begins with teaching and rebuking. The Bible clearly teaches the truth and rebukes or refutes all error. How useful this is in a world filled with deception and false views! So often we're molded by the culture around us in ways that we do not even realize, ways that are contrary to God's Word. God's Word rebukes those errors and teaches us the truth, remolding and transforming our minds. Often people can quote movie lines or sports statistics, and that's fine. But can they quote the Scriptures as well? What fills and shapes your mind? The Bible or our culture? If the Bible is going to be useful, we need to be using it. We need to continually be students of the Scriptures. And as we keep on learning its teachings and listening as it rebukes error, it fully equips us for every good work. How useful the Bible's power is!

Next Paul lists correcting and training in righteousness. How useful the Bible is as it gives us the power to do what is right in God's sight! Through faith in Jesus, you are God's child. Through his word your dear heavenly Father trains you and me to live as his children: serving others in love, forgiving one another, maturing our Christian character, and caring out our God-given responsibilities in the family and the community, at work

and at home. All we need to know is right here in the book. The Bible equips us fully, completely, thoroughly. God has left nothing out that you need to know for faith or for your Christian life. He teaches us what to believe and he empowers us to do right, so that from a heart that trusts in Jesus we can do what is truly good. The Bible fully equips us for every good work. How useful the Bible's power is!

Yes, dear Christian, you believe that the Bible is God's Word. Keep on putting that faith into action as you gladly hear and learn his word, at home and at church, in worship, in Bible class, and in daily devotions. Keep on putting it into practice, contemplating God's word, cherishing it, and doing it, whether a Bible is in front of you or not. Don't just take it out of the shed for an hour or so a week. Fill your heart and mind with God's word. Feed your soul with it daily, just as you feed your body. Let it grow in you and fill you with its power. How useful the Bible's power is. It saves us through faith in Jesus. It fully equips us for every good work.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.